September, 1980

This record is the product of the studio and an interest in African rhythms and sensibilities.* None of the material was written before entering the studio... some parts that were used were the result of the band's pre-studio rehearsals, but these rehearsal were largely done to develop skills and an attitude, not to learn songs.

The skills and attitudes we wanted to develop were an understanding of African musical concepts of interlocking and interdependent parts and rhythms that combine to make a coherent whole. In keeping with this tradition, almost all parts were played continuously...there were no chord changes based around melodies as in conventional songs...the melodies would later arise out of the combination of a number of interlocking parts.

The initial recordings in Nassau were of largely improvised playing by the band and Brian with the above concepts and attitudes functioning as both a guide and a restriction. This playing did not consist of "jamming" or "soloing" in the conventional sense, since once a part, or group of alternating parts, was found to be appropriate, it would be repeated with very little variation throughout a piece...the idea being to establish both a "groove" and an atmosphere.

In an attempt to break entrenched playing patterns the musicians would not always play their "assigned" instruments; thus in a given number Eno and I might play basses, Weymouth play synthesizer, and Harrison percussion. There were no vocals at this point...I had made notes for lyrical contents, but the actual lyrical writing would be determined by the mood and rhythm of the instruments.

These instrumental tracks were then brought to New York where Eno and I added some instruments and worked on the musical and vocal arrangements. Some of the pieces were changed quite radically at this stage. Early parts sometimes served as an inspiration and framework to which newer parts were added, in many instances replacing or rendering obsolete those original parts. Some of

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the vocal melodies were "written" by Eno, and, with additional ones supplied by me, the vocal arrangements began to take shape. Often the melodies and arrangements, in turn, implied particular spiritual attitudes and moral stances, and these gave rise to the styles of vocal phrasing and to the lyrics.

*An interest which had also been the basis of the yet-to-be-released record "My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts," previously recorded by David Byrne and Brian Eno.

Additional References:

African Rhythm and African Sensibility/John Miller Chernoff, University of Chicago Press, 1979

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TALKING HEADS

David Byrne	-	lead vocals, guitars
Chris Frantz	-	drums
Jerry Harrison	-	vocals, guitars, keyboards
Tina Weymouth	-	vocals, bass, synthesizer

"We are not the same as we used to be," exclaimed David Byrne as Talking Heads took the stage at Canada's Heatwave Festival August 23rd. The main difference was readily apparent, as nine people, instead of the usual four, comprised the band's lineup. With the addition of an extra guitarist, bassist, percussionist, keyboard player and a female vocalist, Talking Heads had indeed added a dynamic dimension and funky force to their already acclaimed sound.

The Heatwave Festival and a performance the following week at New York's Dr. Pepper Central Park Festival were the first showcases of Talking Heads' African-inspired new sound. Reactions, from critics and audiences alike, proved extremely favorable. Robert Hilburn of the Los Angeles Times wrote: "Without sacrificing its urban anxiety, the band has moved from its old approach to a fuller, more percussion-oriented style. The result could be a potent step toward a new rock-funk synthesis."

And John Rockwell, writing in The New York Times said: "Wednesday night at the Wollman Rink in Central Park, Talking Heads appeared in yet another guise -- as a 10-member Afro-funk unit (another vocalist appeared with the band in New York)...for long-term conceptual explorations and as an immediate, on-the-spot piece of music making, the evening was a triumph for the band and its leader David Byrne."

Although once mistakenly grouped with New York's punk rock movement, Talking Heads steadfastly emerged as the premiere masters of a sound that people consistently found hard to classify. John Rockwell earlier wrote that there "has hardly ever been a more original sound to emerge in music in recent years, pop or classical; in that sense, Talking Heads is literally incomparable."

Since their debut as a trio at CBGB's summer festival in June, 1975, Talking Heads (whose name comes from a TV term) have become one of the most talked-up and written-about contemporary bands. Their first LP Talking Heads: 77 garnered almost unanimous praise, with Rolling Stone calling it "one of the definitive records of the decade." Their next album, 1978's More Songs About Buildings And Food, was hailed as "brilliant stuff" (Circus) and being "so solid it shimmies" (Creem). Last year's Fear Of Music, the group's second effort with producer Brian Eno which was recorded using a Record Plant mobile unit at Chris and Tina's Long Island City loft, continued the string of critical acclaim. Rolling Stone found the record, which was also the Heads' second LP to hit America's Top Thirty, "often deliberately, brilliantly disorienting" and Trouser Press concluded that "on Fear Of Music Eno and Talking Heads have evolved their music into ever more sophisticated realms, reaching towards the future while at the same time taking a more inclusive attitude toward the best elements of rock's past."

Talking Heads take their music seriously, all having played instruments since childhood. They originally began expressing themselves through art, and later switched to music. David, Chris and Tina studied architecture at Harvard. "We became disenchanted, actually bored, with the contemporary art scene," the Heads recollect. "So, we decided that pop music would be the most fun and accessible way of communicating." The band still plays an active role in designing their album packages, which are as distinctive as their songs. The Fear Of Music package was nominated for a Grammy Award last year because of its innovative and striking embossed jacket.

David and Chris formed their first band together, the Artistics (sometimes the Autistics) at RISD in 1974. Tina soon joined them and by September of that year, all three were living, working and practicing their music in New York. By 1975 they were playing at CBGB's and word-of-mouth on the band was spreading. They began playing more club dates and attracting much press attention and finally signed to Sire in November 1976, putting out a limited edition single "Love Goes To Building On Fire in December. Jerry (one of the original Modern Lovers) joined them in April, 1977 and the addition of his keyboards and musicianship rounded out their music, but "it was still a little more oddball and wacky than it is now," according to David. The Heads then began recording their debut 77 LP, produced by Tony Bongiovi, in New York, which was released later that year to even more acclaim.

The followup More Songs, recorded in the Bahamas at Compass Point Studios with Brian Eno producing, contained material already written and performed by the band before the first LP became a reality. The album's only cover, "Take Me To The River," went top 30 as a single, launching Talking Heads on radio nationwide. Moreover, John Rockwell went on to name that LP #1 in his Top Ten of the year and People magazine name More Songs one of 1978's best as well.

Fear Of Music entered the charts immediately on release in August 1979 and its single cut, "Life During Wartime," became a favorite in clubs with its "this ain't no party, this ain't no disco" refrain. Talking Heads enjoyed added commerical success that year by appearing on "Saturday Night Live" and "American Bandstand," and went on with an SRO cross-country tour and a hugely successful European and Australian/Far Eastern junket.

Remain In Light, Talking Heads' newest LP produced by Brian Eno and recorded in the Bahamas and New york, was released in October. Featuring eight original new compositions, the record utilizes the talents of several other musicians as well as the Heads. Side one has three very rhythmic, African-sounding cuts -- "Born Under Punches (The Heat Goes On)," "Crosseyed And Painless" (which was released in advance of the LP in a 12" pro single version) and "The

Great Curve." Side two includes five more melodic cuts, one of which "Once In A Lifetime," is destined to be on everyone's lips once they've heard it.

The Heads see this LP as a natural progression for them -- they admit to being a bunch of "overachievers," or, as Tina says: "We were more interested in not limiting ourselves, in allowing ourselves to develop naturally." And that doesn't mean bending themselves and their sound to fit accepted tastes or commercial standards. "We're in a funny position," David Byrne adds. "It wouldn't please us to make music that's impossible to listen to, but we don't want to compromise for the sake of commerciality. It's possible to make exciting, respectable stuff that can succeed in the marketplace."

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